

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 486

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 0459

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LAMBASTS RUMOR MONGERS

REF: VICTORIA 449

1. POST-COUP PERIOD, WITH ATZFENDANT UNCERTAINTIES, HAS PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE GRIST FOR WHAT IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES IS AN ACTIVE LOCAL POLITICAL RUMOR MILL. LATE LAST WEEK PARTICULARLY, WILD STORIES MADE THE ROUNDS TO EFFECT THAT MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FERRARI AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE HODOUL HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND THAT COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT WAS IN OFFING. ACCORDING CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL MINISTERS, RUMORS WERE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED AND SPREAD BY ROBERT FRICHOT, A FORMER BACKBENCH MP FROM PARTY OF DEPOSED PRESIDENT MANCHAM. PRESIDENT RENE TOLD CHARGE IN AUGUST 3 MEETING THAT GOVERNMENT "COMPLETELY UNITED" AT PRESENT.

2. PRESIDENT RENE HAS NOW MOVED TO COUNTERACT THIS KIND OF RUMOR MONGERING. IN RADIO ADDRESS TO NATION AUGUST 1, HE STATED THAT GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PUT A STOP TO "FALSE PROPAGANDA,"
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RUMORS AND GOSSIP." FROM NOW ON, HE SAID, "WE CONSIDER THAT ONE OF THE GREATEST CRIMES WHICH ONE CAN COMMIT AGAINST HIS COUNTRY IS TO SOW FEAR THROUGH LIES, AND WE WILL TAKE STEPS TO DEAL WITH SUCH PEOPLE WITHOUT PITY." RENE DID NOT ELABORATE ON WHAT SPECIFIC MEASURES GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE TO PIN DOWN SOURCE OF FALSE RUMORS.

3. PERHAPS TO ALLAY CONCERN THAT ANTI-RUMOR CAMPAIGN WAS TO BE PRETEXT FOR WITCH HUNT, HE DREW CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN NEGATIVE, DESTRUCTIVE GOSSIP, AND CRITICISM, WHICH HE SUGGESTED WAS NECESSARY AND HELPFUL.

4. COMMENT: IF RECENT SPATE OF RUMORS WAS IN FACT COORDINATED BY MANCHAM FOLLOWERS, IT MAY REPRESENT OPENING ROUND IN LONG AWAITED ANTI-GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN. SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT REMAINS ALERT TO DANGER OF INTERNAL TURMOIL AND HAS IDENTIFIED AND IS WATCHING HANDFUL OF LOCAL POLITICIANS WHO ACTIVELY OPPOSE REGIME. ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAS THUS FAR BEEN JAILED AS RESULT OF JUNE 5 COUP, GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO MOVE QUICKLY AND DECISIVELY AGAINST OPPONENTS IF SUFFICIENTLY PROVOKED.
MATTSON

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